



NASW

National Association of Social Workers / Connecticut Chapter

2139 Silas Deane Highway
Suite 205
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
(860) 257-8066

Shannon Perkins, LMSW, President
Stephen Wanczyk- Karp, LMSW, Executive Director
info.naswct@socialworkers.org

TESTIMONY REGARDING HB-5037: AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023

Appropriations Committee

February 17, 2022

Presented By: Kathleen Callahan, MSW

Dear Honorable Chairpersons Osten and Walker, Ranking Members Miner and France, Vice Chairs Hartley, Dathan, and Nolan, and all other distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kathleen Callahan, a resident of Stratford, and the chair of the National Association of Social Workers Connecticut Chapter's Education and Legislative Action Network (NASW/CT ELAN). I am testifying on behalf of the chapter which represents over 2,300 members. We call upon the Appropriations Committee to reject the proposed education budget in *HB-5037: An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023* and craft a revision that advances student-centered funding.

NASW/CT supports legislation that addresses the impact of Covid-19 and the potential exacerbation of inequities and disparities related to race, class, and ethnicity. Education plays a pivotal role in an individual's economic and social mobility. A more just and student-centered system provides learning opportunities for all Connecticut public school students.

The past two years have presented a stark reminder of both the resilience of our students and the state's obligation to provide equal education opportunities for all Connecticut public school children. We believe that equitably funding our districts is critical to the success of our students and communities, now more than ever.

I spoke last year of the significant funding gap between districts with majority student of color and diverse populations and majority white populations and the difficulties in our highest-need, lowest-wealth districts that do not have adequate resources to educate their students amid a pandemic. The three rounds of federal relief, the ESSER funds, continue to allow districts to cope with some of the academic and emotional impact on students, teachers, and administrators.

But this supplemental funding should be applied as defined: temporary aid, specific to pandemic support. Adjusting the currently proposed budget to fully fund the ECS formula is necessary for transition when the federal funding expires. Any gap, let alone a

devastating stoppage, would hinder fulfilling our obligation to all students. Restoring a strong foundation for all our public schools cannot be built upon federal relief funding but upon continued state investment.

Students still need social and emotional support, as well as options to catch up on lost learning. To appropriately show up for their students, teachers and staff still need training to address the loop of remote, onsite, and hybrid learning and the impact it has had on them. The need to retain new school social workers and hire more is only growing.

In closing, NASW-CT urges the committee to reject the governor's proposed education budget as it stands and consider the needs of our students as you craft a revision. Our students continue to recover from extraordinary, challenging times. It would be an abdication of our responsibilities – as the adults supporting our students, our children.

With respect and gratitude for your service and consideration,

Kathleen Callahan
NASW/CT ELAN Chair
Stratford, CT